

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 1117

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT SHUM NS
SUBJ: SURINAME'S PARLIAMENTARY CHARIMAN UNDER FIRE

REF: PARAMARIBO A29

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THE MAJOR INTERNAL POLITICAL STORY
IN SURINAME OVER THE PAST SIX WEEKS HAS BEEN THE CONVICTION
OF PARLIAMENTARY CHAIRMAN EMILE WIJNTUIN FOR SLANDERING
SURIAME'S AMBASSADOR TO THE EED, ROBERT FERRIER (BROTHER
OF PRESIDENT FERRIER). ON JULY 27 A LOCAL COURT SENTENCED
WIJNTUIN TO A FINE OF 50 SURINAMES GUILDERS (US \$28) OR
TEN JAYS IN JAIL FOR HAVING CALLED FERRIER A LIAR. WIJNTUIN
WAS REPORTED TO HAVE MADE THE SLANDEROUS COMMENT ABOUT
FERRIER IN THE HEAT OF EMOTION DURING THE PUBLIC CONTROVERSY
HE CARRIED ON WITH FERRIER FOLLOWING THEIR DISAGREEMENT OVER
THE ADVISABILITY OF WIJNTUIN'S RAISING THE ISSUE OF HUMAN
RIGHTS AT THE MAY 29-JUNE 2 MEETING IN GRENADA OF
PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM LOME CONVENTION MEMBER STATES (REFAIR).
WIJNTUIN PAID THE FINE AND RECEIVE A MILD VOTE OF
CONFIDENCE FROM HIS FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE ARRON COALITION
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IN PARLIAMENT. THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION HAS SINCE
BEEN VOCIFEROUSLY DEMANDING THAT WIJNTUIN SHOULD SUFFER
UNSPECIFIED "CONSEQUENCES" FOR HIS MISDEED. MEANWHILE ,
FERRIER, HIS HONOR VINDICATED, HAS REPORTEDLY DROPPED THE
NOTION OF ENTERING A CIVIL SUIT AGAINST WIJNTUIN FOR DAMAGES.
END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. BEING CONFIDENTIAL. AT SHOWINGS OF THE "ROOTS FILM AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE IN LATE JULY AND DURING THE AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL FORMAL COURTESY CALL ON WIJNTUIN ON AUGUST 8, WIJNTUIN APPEARED TO BE DEJECTED OVER THE AFFAIR. HE TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE WOULD HAVE NOTHING MORE TO DO WITH POLITICS AFTER THE COMPLETION OF HIS CURRENT TERM IN PARLIAMENT (WHICH WILL RUN UNTIL 1981, UNLESS PRIME MINISTER ARRON LOSES HIS MAJORITY SUPPORT AND ELECTIONS ARE CALLED BEFORE THAT TIME). HE SAID THAT THE DISPUTE HAS BEEN UPSETTING TO HIS WIFE, AND IMPLIED THAT SHE IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN HIS PRIVATE DECISION (AS EXPRESSED TO THE AMBASSADOR) TO FOREGO POLITICS IN THE FUTURE. HE GAVE NO INDICATION HOWEVER, THAT HE PLANS TO RESIGN BEFORE THE END OF THIS TERM OF PARLIAMENT.

3. COMMENT: IT IS MORE UNFORTUNATE THAT WIJNTUIN'S FORTHRIGHT STANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT GRENADA SHOULD HAVE LED TO SUCH A DEVELOPMENT. NEITHER PRESIDENT FERRIER, AMBASSADOR FERRIER, NOR ANYONE IN A POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE ARRON GOVERNMENT DISAGREES ON THE SUBSTANCE OF WHAT HE SAID IN GRENADA, BUT RATHER ON THE TACTICAL ADVISABILITY OF RAISING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN THAT FORUM. FOR EXAMPLE, WIJNTUIN MADE A STRONG HUMAN RIGHTS SPEECH DURING THE STATE VISIT OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ IN LATE JULY, AND NO ONE OBJECTED. HOWEVER, AMBASSADOR FERRIER OBVIOUSLY FELT CONSTRAINED TO TAKE CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION TO VINDICATE HIMSELF AFTER WIJNTUIN MADE HIS ILL-ADVISED COMMENT ABOUT FERRIER'S VERACITY.

4. WIJNTUIN'S POPULARITY AND PRESTIGE HAVE OBVIOUSLY SUFFERED A DECLINE. EVEN BEFORE THE FERRIER EPISODE WIJNTUIN WAS DRAWING INCREASING CRITICISM FROM THE OPPOSITION FOR HIS ALLEGEDLY ARBITRARY STYLE OF LEADERSHIP. ARRON AND HIS NATIONAL PARTY SURINAME (NPS) COLLEAGUES IN PARLIAMENT HAVE GIVEN WIJNTUIN LUKEWARE SUPPORT, IF ONLY BECAUSE THEY NEED THE CONTINUED BACKING OF WIJNTUIN AND HIS TWO FELLOW PROGRESSIVE SURINAME PEOPLE'S PARTY (PSV) MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN ORDER FOR THE ARRON COALITION TO RETAIN ITS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS HARD TO ENVISION WIJNTUIN JOINING THE OPPOSITION, WHICH HAS STEPPED UP ITS CRITICISM OF HIM FOLLOWING THE COURT VERDICT. SO THE PROSPECT IS THAT WIJNTUIN WILL CONTINUE IN HIS LEADERSHIP POSITION IN PARLIAMENT, ALBEIT WITH ASOMEWHAT DIMINISHED ENTHUSIASM AND PRESTIGE. END CONFIDENTIAL. OSTRANDER

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NNN

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